Tuck - Speech 1848

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ON THE REFERENCE OF THE

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE U S.,
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The House being in Committee of the Whole, proceeded to the consideration of the Annual Message of the President of the United States, and the resolutions referring the same to various appropriate Committees.

MR. TUCK, of New Hampshire, addressed the Committee as follows:

MR. CHAIRMAN: With the convictions I entertain in regard to the importance of the questions now pending before the country, and the present critical condition of the nation, I am glad that the several attempts which have been made to stop discussion on the President's message have not yet been successful. I believe that more time may be profitably spent in examining into the policy of the Executive, the purposes which he has in view, the means by which it is proposed to accomplish those purposes, and the consequences of success. Let the designs, measures, and general policy of the Administration receive a thorough examination, be laid open to the view of this House and the people, and then receive the condemnation or approval of the nation.

The gentleman from Indiana, (Mr. ROBINSON,) at the close of his defence of the President on yesterday, requested that the debate might now be closed. I consider this demand unreasonable, and especially when made by a gentleman who had said all in his power on one side, and taken up one-eighth of the whole time spent in the discussion. I will remind the gentleman, also, that though his defence was as able as any honest man deserved, yet he had entirely omitted to explain some things which we all desire to understand. I hope the debate will not close till the people are put in possession of the facts or explanations, by which the patriotism and foresight of the President can be vindicated, in granting leave to Santa Anna and his suit to pass our blockading squadron and enter Mexico. We have now been at war a long time, have spent a hundred millions of dollars, and sacrificed many thousands of our citizens, in attempting to overcome a force organized principally by this same Santa Anna, and the thirty or forty talented Mexicans who with him passed our lines by direction of the President. This is an astounding fact—too incredible to be believed had it not been confessed; and, upon those who profess to believe in the wisdom and patriotism of the Administration, we make an express demand for explanation.

The President, in a late message, accused a large portion of his fellow-citizens of "giving aid and comfort to the enemy." This accusation was greedily seized by the rivals for executive favor; and we can now hear no speech in this Hall, or elsewhere, from the war party, nor read any of their newspapers, without encountering numberless repetitions of the same charge. There is a maxim, supposed to be of universal application, that those who are most ready to impeach the motives of others, are most liable to act from corrupt motives themselves. Let the people decide where the charge of "giving aid and comfort to the enemy" rightfully belongs. I shall make no accusation against the President, but I shall remind him that his permission to Santa Anna and his suit to pass "the American lines," resembles another pass I have read about in history, given to one John Anderson, and signed by one Benedict Arnold.

It was said yesterday that the delay of this discussion gives aid and comfort to the enemy. Congress have already appropriated a million of dollars to supply the wants of the army, and can we not now take breath and deliberate? Is it required that we daily appropriate a million of the people's money, under the penalty of being accused of treason if we hesitate to yield to such exorbitant demands? I hope not. For one I am resolved, before contributing to involve the present generation in a heavy debt, and to draw a mortgage upon our posterity—before plunging into a course that will sacrifice many of our citizens, endanger our liberties, and incur fearful responsibilities before Heaven, to examine thoroughly the character of the unnatural war now raging between the two North American republics.

In submitting my views, to the extent permitted by my limited time, I shall begin by considering the remote causes of the war. I would not trouble the committee, by calling their attention to some events which are now history, and probably familiar to most of those whom I have the honor to address, did I not believe that it is important to recur to the past in order to form a correct judgment of the character of the struggle in which the nation is engaged.

The annexation of Texas to this Union was the remote cause of the Mexican war; that object was sought and accomplished by our Government, for the purpose of the protection and extension of slavery. And the same considerations and motives now constitute so material a portion of the designs of our Government in prosecuting our conquests, that without those motives the war would cease immediately.

I need not tell you, sir, that the subject of American slavery now attracts the attention of the whole country. In proceeding with my remarks, I shall be obliged to speak freely of this institution. Those who have created this necessity have no reason to complain. Southern gentlemen have thrust this matter upon us, and made it impossible to examine the causes and objects of the war, without also considering the subject of slavery. I will, however, state, that the anti-slavery spirit of the country, which now seems so terrific to many, is entirely defensive; it is an excitement created wholly by the encroachments which have been made upon freedom and the free States. So far as I understand it, it does not contemplate any thing of which the friends of constitutional liberty, and of immunities according to law, need have any apprehensions.

In laying before the Committee some proof of the motives and purposes of annexation, I seem to myself to be supporting a foregone conclusion. I cannot realize that the objects and motives which led to that measure can be a matter of doubt, when the archives of our Government contain the published announcement of those purposes, as set forth in the official negotiations preparatory to the same. But, knowing that many yet deny the designs of that measure, and believing that at the present crisis the truth should in this place be well understood, I invite your attention to a few considerations.

The old province or department of Texas was settled principally by emigrants from the United States, who went there with their slaves while Mexico was subject to Spain, and during the early days of her attempt to adopt the model of our Government. The men who achieved the Mexican independence were not insensible to the inconsistency of claiming liberty for themselves and denying it to others. In 1829, the President of that republic issued a decree abolishing slavery in all the Mexican dominions. This decree was obeyed in all the provinces except Texas, where it was set at defiance. This was the first stage of hostile relations, between the settlers in Texas (who were principally from the Southern States) and the authorities at Mexico. It was an explicit issue between freedom and slavery. There were difficulties at the seat of the central Government which delayed the contest that must eventually be decided.

In the mean time a new impulse was given to emigration from the Southern States; volunteer adventurers rallied for Texas, and the rebel "Patriots," receiving new hope, declared their independence. A conflict approached, and the battle of San Jacinto decided in favor of the Texans.

But the end was not yet; a state of war existed, and the Texans, constantly fearing an invasion by Santa Anna, and encouraged by the sympathy of a few of our own citizens, sent Gen. Hunt to this city in 1837, with a proposition of annexation. He made a written application to our Government, which was promptly considered, and as promptly answered, in accordance with the unanimous opinion of Mr. Van Buren and his cabinet. An extract from the reply of Mr. Forsyth, Secretary of State, to Gen. Hunt, dated August 25, 1837, is so explicit on interesting questions of national law, now very little regarded, and besides is in such dignified contrast to all other state papers that have issued from our Government on the subject of Texas, that I will read it to the committee; asking them, in the mean time, to consider what would have now been the happy state of this country, and our well-founded title to the respect of the world, had the policy of Mr. Forsyth not been abandoned by his successors. It is as follows:

"So long as Texas shall remain at war, while the United States are at peace with her adversary, the proposition of the Texan Minister Plenipotentiary necessarily involves the question of war with that adversary. The United States are bound to Mexico by a treaty of amity and commerce, which will be scrupulously observed on their part, so long as it can be reasonably hoped that Mexico will perform her duties and respect our rights under it. The United States might justly be suspected of a disregard of the friendly purposes of the compact, if the overture of Gen. Hunt were to be even reserved for future consideration, as this would imply a disposition on our part to espouse the quarrel of Texas with Mexico; a disposition wholly at variance with the spirit of the treaty, with the uniform policy, and the obvious welfare of the United States."

This letter, sir, was written by a Democrat who had some regard for the old landmarks of republicanism—by one who paid some attention to the forms of law, the spirit of the Constitution, the sanctity of treaties, and the opinions of the world. The warnings of Washington against intervention—the opinion of Jefferson, that the Constitution had made no provision for incorporating a foreign nation into the Union—had not then been forgotten. Such was the doctrine of the Van Buren democracy, approved by the unanimous voice of the country. It was the doctrine of the Democracy till the date of the Baltimore Convention, when it was reversed, and the whole party made to turn about; not only without reason, but against reason; against the deepest convictions of the conscience and understanding of the whole party. If the time shall ever come when common sense, common law, or common honesty, shall direct the authorities of this nation, this doctrine will again be recognised and practised; and the annexation of Texas, as perpetrated by the united energies of John Tyler and James K. Polk, will be acknowledged to have been in violation of our "treaty of amity and commerce," an espousal of the quarrel of Texas, and an act of war against Mexico.

What were the pressing objects of national interest, not to say necessity, which could force our democratic Government to abandon its integrity, after this public confession of our relations and duties, to a distracted sister republic? What motives have led us to a line of policy that humbles every American heart, robs of national pride every intelligent citizen, and threatens, with imminent danger, our most sacred privileges? The answer is found in the archives of this Capitol, and may be read by all. It was not to "extend the area of

freedom," but to enlarge the borders of slavery; it was to build up and establish—to render permanent and perpetual an institution repugnant alike to every principle of freedom, every sentiment of republicanism, every feeling of humanity—an institution which casts a dark shade over our country's history, and which, if cherished, will ultimately number us with the republics which are now no more.

When John Tyler had made the treaty of annexation in 1844, and laid the same before the Senate for approval, that body called upon him to produce the correspondence in regard to that measure, showing the motives which had induced him to enter into it. The information was given under an injunction of secrecy, afterwards removed, and is contained in Senate document No. 341, of the first session of the 28th Congress. In that document is contained an explicit, unequivocal, and often repeated declaration of the only objects of our Government designed to be accomplished by the treaty. These reasons, stated by those who were authorized to speak for the nation, are now of record; and, without any contradictory proof whatever, announce to the world, and will announce to posterity, the true motives which led the United States to that disastrous act. I will give a few extracts, as specimens of the whole correspondence; averring to the committee that the character is the same throughout, and that the one object of continuing and extending slavery in Texas, and protecting it in the United States, is boldly avowed, and made the foundation of every step in the progress of the negotiation. The letter which first announces the incipient scheme, and spreads out the apprehensions of the Tyler Cabinet, on account of the prospects in Texas, was written by Mr. Upshur, Secretary of State under Mr. Tyler, to Mr. Murphy, our chargé at Texas, and bears date August 8th, 1843. The letter is long, and the Secretary begins by informing Mr. Murphy that a plan for the abolition of slavery in Texas had been made known to this Government; that it was understood the same was to be accomplished by the purchase of all the slaves; and that a company in England were to furnish a portion or the whole of the necessary funds. After urging Mr. Murphy to inquire immediately into the designs of Texas in regard to slavery, and its prospects in that country, he recurs to the rumored plan of abolition, and says:

"A movement of this sort cannot be contemplated by us in silence."

Again, he says:

"It cannot be permitted to succeed, without the most strenuous efforts on our part to arrest a calamity so serious to every part of the country."

Becoming more particular in stating the causes of alarm, and in order to impress more deeply the importance of the subject, he further says:

"The establishment, in the very midst of our slaveholding States, of an independent government, forbidding the existence of slavery, and by a people born, for the most part, among us, reared up in our habits, and speaking our language, could not fail to produce the most unhappy effects upon both parties. If Texas were in that condition, her territory would afford a ready refuge for the fugitive slaves of Louisiana and Arkansas, and would hold out to them an encouragement to run away, which no municipal regulations of those States could possibly counteract.

The whole letter is of the same character with the parts I have read, and I will not trouble the committee with reading any more of it. The communication had the desired effect upon the gentleman to whom it was directed, and immediately aroused all the energy of his peculiar patriotism. He adopts all Mr. Upshur's opinions, entertains all his anxieties, and promptly replies under date of Sept. 25th, 1843. He compliments the talent of the Secretary, after

the manner of a politician, when writing to his superior in office, and speaking of the designs of England says:

"England is anxious to get rid of the constitution of Texas, because it secures in the most nervous and clear language the rights of the master to his slave, and it also prohibits the introduction of slaves into Texas from any other nation or quarter than the United States."

Again:

"The constitution of Texas secures to the master the perpetual right to his slave, and prohibits the introduction of slaves into Texas from any other quarter than the United States."

Again:

"If the United States preserves and secures to Texas the possession of her constitution and present form of Government, then we have gained all that we can desire, and also all that Texas asks or wishes."

Again:

"Seeing that this surrender of sovereignty by Texas to Mexico at once liberates all the slaves in Texas, and that England thereby gains all she wants, and more than she ever expected, can the Government of the United States longer doubt what to do?"

Three days after, he again writes to Mr. Upshur, and, echoing the sentiments of the latter, remarks:

"The States in which slavery exists would have good reason to apprehend the worst consequences from the establishment of a foreign non-slaveholding State upon their immediate borders."

Telling the Secretary of "the eloquent manner in which he has pourtrayed those evils," his zeal overflows in the following language:

"I feel a whirlwind of emotion in my bosom which I will not attempt to describe. Let the Government of the United States take some immediate *quick step* on this subject. You have in this correspondence enough to justify immediate and prompt action.

"Pardon me if I am solicitous on this subject. I feel the deep interest at stake. Our whole Southern interests are involved in this negotiation, and with it the interests of the Union itself. The great blow to our civil institutions is to be struck here, and it will be a fatal blow if not timely arrested."

This pretence of enthusiasm, exhibited in the cause of slavery by an obscure pensioner on the Tyler administration, should have been treated with contempt; and his impudent recommendation to our Government to "take some immediate *quick step*," ought to have received a severe rebuke. Instead of this, we find the whole cabinet caught the contagion, and exerted the whole power of their station and patronage to second the views of this obscure adventurer, residing in Texas. In a subsequent letter, Mr. Murphy writes to the Government on the subject of annexation, and says, that without it "slavery cannot exist ten years in Texas, and probably not half that time." There is any amount of similar proof in the book I hold in my hand, and I might take up all my time in reading the evidence at length. But I need not do this; I have before me democratic proof that the objects of the "Texan iniquity" were not only such as I have represented them to be, but that those objects were understood, exposed, and condemned by the Democratic party in the Northern States, up to the time of the Baltimore Convention.

I ask the self-complacent Democracy, who are so free with their charges of treason, and Mexican federalism, to listen to the following passages from the

three newspapers in New Hampshire, which are the mouth-pieces of the unchangeable Democracy, and which are now the pillars of support in the Granite State, to this slavery propagating administration.

The Nashua Gazette, of date Nov. 16th, 1843, contains the following editorial:

"The evils that will be entailed upon the North by the admission of Texas into the Union are incalculable, great, vast—beyond all human calculation.

"The object and design throughout is black as ink—as bitter as hell. No other reason on earth can be assigned for this southern movement than a determination to perpetuate that accursed institution, which, as a matter of compromise, was acceded to by the North at the time of the adoption of the Articles of Confederation. If the South persist in forcing Texas upon us, the result is evident to all. The consequences are multifarious, to say nothing of their ruin. May Providence avert this calamity, and save our Republic from disunion, misery, and destruction."

The Portsmouth (N. H.) Mercury, in the fall of 1843, says:

"It is a matter of deep regret that our Southern friends intend to agitate, in the next Congress, the question of the annexation of Texas to our Union. It is understood that this is a favorite project with Mr. Calhoun. But as its accomplishment might prove fatal to our free institutions, it will be a solemn duty of the Northern Democracy to oppose it."

The New Hampshire Patriot, May, 1844, has the following:

"Slavery and the defence of slavery form the controlling considerations urged in favor of the treaty [of annexation] by those who have been engaged in its negotiation. To these doctrines we can never subscribe, and whenever they are offensively urged upon the free States, they deserve to be pointedly rebuked."

I lay the above extracts before the Southern branch of the Democracy, hoping that they will understand the true character of their Northern allies. The same men who uttered the above sentiments as matters of *principle* from which they could *never* swerve, in less than three months denied, utterly reprobated, the faith they had professed; and have ever since employed their time in abusing the men who would not sacrifice their principles at the same time. The Democratic leaders of New Hampshire at the present time are the men who have made this somerset in their confession of faith; who cry out "moral cowards," "enemies of their country," and "Mexican Federalists," while they know in their hearts that they are the most arrant moral cowards alive, and that there is no principle in *any* creed which they would not sacrifice for a reward. They have been called Northern men with Southern principles, but this is an imputation on the South to which I will not subscribe. They are Northern men with no principles at all. Had they been men of *Southern* principles, or of any principle whatever, they would not have made such an humiliating exhibition. I will not say that these men would not rather be right than wrong; indeed I think they would have chosen to follow the Van Buren democracy, which they expected would prevail. But the virtue which they possess is not at all adapted to a state of temptation. When the Baltimore Convention sacrificed Mr. Van Buren, and adopted an unknown candidate, and a new creed of faith; and when Mr. Ritchie published the significant fact that "they who did not go for annexation *need expect nothing from the new administration*," the trial was too strong for them. They hailed the new nomination as "the very best that could be made;" and, in respect to Texas, fulfilled to the letter the prophecy of the eccentric statesman of Roanoke, when, in 1820, he addressed just such a class of men on the floor of this House.

Turning to the representatives who had betrayed the North in the Missouri compromise, Mr. Randolph, pointing to each one separately, said, "you Northern dough-faces! we have bought you once, and when we want you we will buy you again, dog-cheap."

But, sir, I am happy to say that this class of politicians is small in the North, and is daily becoming less. The people, though confiding too long in their leaders, are beginning to understand them, and cast them off. The people may be deceived, but cannot be corrupted.

I will now call the attention of the committee to a new and most important construction of the Constitution, which was first announced in this Texan correspondence, and which may well challenge the attention of the country, both at the North and South. We have seen the purpose for which annexation was sought, and at the first view we are surprised at the official conduct of those who figured in the scheme, and, on examining the correspondence, we discover occasion for serious alarm. We see a construction of the national compact, which declares it to be the *function* and solemn *duty* of the General Government to protect and support the institution of slavery.

In the same letter, last quoted from Mr. Upshur, he says:

"Although those non-slaveholding States are as much opposed to the institution, [slavery] as England herself, yet the *Constitution of the United States lays them under obligations in regard to it* which, if duly respected, would secure the rights of the slaveholder."

Mr. Calhoun, as Secretary of State, takes the same ground. In a letter to Mr. Packenham, dated April 18, 1844, he vindicates the Texan treaty, and, after giving his views of the effect upon the United States of abolishing slavery in Texas, says, in reference to this last object:

"It is felt to be the *imperious duty of the Federal Government*, the common representative and protector of the States of this Union, to adopt in self-defence the most effectual measures to defeat it."

Now, sir, before this Government makes any further progress, before we take one more step in our onward march, the people of the United States demand to know if this construction of our national compact is well founded? This point *must* be settled. It has heretofore been proclaimed by legislative resolutions, reaffirmed by numerous public meetings at the South, that the General Government had nothing to do with slavery. But annexation has destroyed old landmarks, reversed old principles, and introduced a new policy and a new code of morals into the country, which we are anxious to understand. If we live under a Constitution that compels us to support and defend slavery, we want to know it, and we want to know it now. We are at a crisis in the Government when it is important to understand our rights, and also to understand our duties. For, let me inform gentlemen, that this new doctrine will bring with it responsibilities and solemn duties, as well as heavy and disagreeable burdens. If the General Government have a jurisdiction over the subject of slavery *to support and defend it*, they have also a jurisdiction and a duty *to limit, control, and restrain it.* Let gentlemen consider the course they are taking, and understand the consequences of this new doctrine. If they take a construction liberal for the purposes of slavery, they must take one liberal also for the purpose of liberty; but they can *not* have a construction free as regards slavery, but strict as regards liberty.

We discard this novel construction, and pronounce it an infraction and an outrage upon the rights of the free States. The Constitution neither requires nor authorizes the General Government to wield its powers in defence of

slavery. Such a representation of the nature of the compact between the States of this Union, made by our Secretary of State to the representative of the English nation, was a slander upon our country, and an indignity upon the memory of our fathers. Their lives, characters, and circumstances, as well as the letter and spirit of the Constitution, prove that they formed no agreement to sustain oppression. When they assembled to form a Constitution, those from the North came with undisguised abhorrence of slavery, which their habits, principles, and religious education taught them to be morally wrong. They were not the men to compromise their principles by involving themselves in guilt. They were crowned with laurels from the revolutionary conflict, and had just written with their blood the truth, that "all men are born free and equal;" and that "the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," is "inalienable." They had no belief that the natural rights of a colored man were different from those of the white man: their sentiment was—

"We know no crime in color'd skin,
Nor think the God above
Could fix the brand of slave upon
The children of his love."

Such was the sentiment of the men of the North, who had periled their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor, in defence of the principles of universal liberty, and of the doctrine that liberty is the gift of God, and not of any government or potentate. With such sentiments they went to the work of forming a constitution. They believed that when the child first breathed, he was furnished with a charter from God, which secured to him life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This sentiment had been their inspiring faith during every stage of the Revolution, and it never entered into their hearts to sacrifice it for any earthly consideration whatever.

The South had also fought bravely in defence of the same declaration of rights. A disinterested patriotism, a self-sacrificing devotion, had characterized her statesmen and her heroes, and endeared them to the whole country. But they were connnected with slavery, unfortunately thought it necessary to their prosperity, and wished to have the institution preserved to them under the national compact. With the difficulties and dangers attending this difference of opinion the convention labored for many days without any progress. At length, however, it was arranged to the acquiescence of both parties. It was agreed to leave the subject just where it remained under the confederation, that is, with the States where it existed. To make this still plainer, article tenth of the amendments was adopted, by which it was declared that the powers not expressly delegated were "reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." Such was the foundation on which the compact was based; and, in the first sentence, it is by them most appropriately declared, that "we ordain and establish this Constitution to secure the blessings of liberty."

This doctrine has been held by the Supreme Court, in sundry cases settling the point, that slavery is an institution sustained *only* by the positive law of the district where it exists; that beyond those limits the law which makes one man the property of another has no prescriptive, inferential, or other existence; that the alleged slave, having passed into a free State, may rightfully defend himself; and if he have the physical force to resist his masters, may maintain his freedom there, or go to a place of refuge. It cannot be denied, sir, that the people of the free States hold the blessings of personal liberty as sacredly as the Southern States do the privileges of slavery. The construction of the Constitution promulgated by the authors of the Texan plot, and acted upon by this Administration, is abominable, and must be repudiated. The encroach-

ments upon our rights from the early days of the Goverment have been quite insupportable, but by this new construction all past trespasses are legalized, and it is henceforth proclaimed "a solemn duty" of the General Government to sustain slavery! Sir, this will never be tolerated The free States delegated no more power to the Federal Government to involve them in slavery, than the slave States did to involve them in its abolition. If Virginia claims the right to sustain slavery, New Hampshire claims the right to be exempt from it.—The people of the free States claim. a right to be exempt from the sin, the shame, the expenses, and the retributions of this fearful wrong. To shed one drop of our blood, or to pay one cent of our money, for its aid, comfort, protection, or support, is an exaction to which we never can submit. This exemption is our legal, constitutional right, and being sustained by the literature, the moral sentiment, and the religious convictions of every civilized and christian nation, we shall not recede. We shall stand firm and immovable—

"——— constant as the Northern Star,
Of whose true, fixed, and resting quality
There is no fellow in the firmament."

We say to the South, take to yourselves the full measure of good and evil connected with this subject. We can have nothing to do with it; we can neither touch nor handle, cherish nor protect it. We leave it where our fathers left it; and though we regard it as the sum of all evils, we shall yet overstep no law in our desire to see it exterminated.

"We ask not ye shall snap the links
That bind you to your dreadful slaves;
Hug, if you will, a corpse that stinks,
And bear it with you to your graves:
But that you *may* go, coupled thus,
You never shall make slaves of us."

Are gentlemen surprised at the anti-slavery excitement in this country? If there were no excitement, it would be proof that the spirit of liberty is dead. There not only is excitement, but that excitement will continue and increase, till the free States, under the guaranties of the Constitution, can enjoy exemption from slavery. I cannot promise quiet to the slave States even then; never, till they get rid of their peculiar institution, which is derogatory to man, and in violation of the laws of God. The compensations of Providence are inevitable, and the South cannot escape reaping the fruits of their institutions.

I have said that the anti-slavery spirit of the country is wholly defensive. This assertion cannot be doubted by any who are acquainted with the history of our Government, and particularly if the history, purposes, and consequences of the annexation of Texas be at all considered.

It has been represented by the public press, and in numerous speeches made in Congress, and elsewhere, that the distracting element in the Republic is the fanatical spirit of Northern and Western abolitionists. Most especially have they been made to bear the blame of introducing fanaticism and disunion into the halls of Congress, of disturbing the compromises of the Constitution, and by petitions, remonstrances, and memorials, endangering the perpetuity of our free institutions.

But, sir, no greater error, no more unfounded belief, could be impressed on the public mind. I grant that it is fanaticism that disturbs the harmony of the Government, and has shaken the whole fabric from centre to circumference; but then it is the fanaticism of the propagandists of slavery, the one idea-ism of those men who believe it to be their mission on earth to propagate bondage.

This is the element which has disturbed the nation, discarded well settled principles of policy and law, violated treaties, provoked the indignation of civilized nations, robbed us of our national pride, broken down the Constitution, and involved us in an aggressive, unnecessary, and wicked war. This is the fanaticism which has thrust upon the nation delicate and exciting questions, and demanded of the people to embrace, to honor, and support the peculiar institution. Had Northern men with Northern principles entered the slave States with banners, and proclaimed liberty to the captive and freedom to the bound, they would not have more palpably violated the compromises of the Constitution, than has the slave spirit perpetrated in every period of our history. Let the millions paid by free people to support and extend slavery, to recover runaway slaves, to prevent emancipation, to carry on pro-slavery wars, rebuke the charge and brand with falsehood the assertion that abolitionism, or any thing but the fell spirit of slavery, has introduced discord and danger into the councils of the nation. Let us expose this hypocritical cry against agitation and fanaticism by men who, by their annexations, wars, conquests, and aggressions, are *picking* our pockets, gagging our mouths, and at the same time raising a hue and cry against us, because we will not stand still and quietly be robbed.

I come now to consider the immediate cause of the war, which was the order of the President to march our army from Corpus Christi, and occupy the country up to the east bank of the Rio Grande, and to inquire whether that order was necessary or justifiable. The supporters of the President say that the Rio Grande was the western boundary of Texas, and therefore we had a right to take possession up to that line. I deny both the premises and the conclusion of this answer. That river was not the boundary of Texas, and if it had been we had no right forcibly to occupy that line, while Mexico was in possession of a portion of the territory claiming it as her own. If, as has been said, Texas were an independent nation at the time of annexation, her territory and her boundaries were limited by her actual possession. She had no title but that of the sword, and gained from Mexico only what she had forcibly seized and held. All the country which was occupied by Texan citizens, and all that from which the Mexicans had been expelled, might be claimed as having been gained by the revolution; but any new conquests or acquisitions could not be vindicated, except by treaty, or by new hostilities, and another war. Had, then, the Texans seized the country to the Rio Grande? There is no pretence of it. The great desert lying between the valley of that river and the valley of the Nueces had never been crossed by Texans. Brazos Santiago, and Santa Fe, lie between these rivers, and in the territory seized by our army. At both of these cities Mexico had custom-houses, where our merchants had for years paid duties to the Mexican government. And we had at the same time a consul, with a commission under the sign manual of the President of the United States, residing at Santa Fe, in an acknowledged foreign country. At the session of Congress at which annexation was effected, a law was passed in regard to drawbacks, in which Santa Fe is expressly named as a city belonging to the Mexican Republic. The inhabitants all spoke the Mexican language, and, according to General Taylor's account, abandoned their houses on the approach of our army. No Texan forces, or Texan inhabitants, had occupied any land within a hundred miles of Matamoras. In one of the despatches of the President to General Taylor, prior to hostilities, he says:

"Mexico has some military establishments on the east side of the Rio Grande, which are, and for some time have been, in the actual occupancy of her troops."

With this evidence, and these admissions, I say that the Rio Grande was *not* the western boundary of Texas; and if the President understood his own acts, he himself knew that such was not the boundary.

But, supposing our title by annexation to have been good to the Rio Grande, yet, as the Mexicans claimed the valley of that river, and were in possession of it, the President could not expel them from the disputed territory without committing an act of war. The recollections of Oregon, and the northeastern boundary, are too fresh to allow this law to be questioned, unless one rule is to be applied to England and another to Mexico.

I confidently assert, then, that the allegation of the President that "Mexico has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory, and shed American blood on American soil," is untrue; and that the preamble to an act of the last Congress, which states that "war exists by the act of Mexico," is justly denominated "the lying preamble."

The President ordered our army to take forcible possession of territory which, if not Mexican, was in dispute, and in the occupancy of Mexican subjects. *This was an act of war.*

He caused our army, before hostilities commenced, to blockade the mouth of the Rio Grande, through which the Mexican forces at Matamoras received their supplies, and thus commenced starving their army while stationed on their own ground. *This was an act of war.*

Weeks before hostilities commenced, he caused a battery to be built on this side of the river, opposite to Matamoras, supplied it with cannon pointing into the heart of the city, and manned it with a force capable at any moment of hurling destruction upon the Mexicans. *This was an act of war.*

Finally, he consummated war by measures which led to an attack by Capt. Thornton, an officer of our army, upon a party of Mexicans who resisted, and sixteen men were killed and wounded. This was the first blood that was spilt, and was *war by the act of the President of the United States.*

To such conclusions am I inevitably brought by examining this subject. I am forced, also, to observe that the order of the President which involved these disastrous consequences was made while Congress was in session, to which body the Constitution gives the war-making power. The barriers of the Constitution have availed nothing for the purposes of peace or freedom, since the blood-thirsty appetite for conquest and slavery propagation seized upon the nation.

Entertaining the views I have expressed of the immediate causes of the war, I lately voted for the amendment offered to a resolution by the gentleman from Massachusetts, (Mr. ASHMUN,) stating that the war was "unnecessarily and unconstitutionally commenced by the President." This has been taken up in the newspapers and pronounced to be "treasonable." I, then, have sinned deeply, for I confess and aver that I never gave a vote more cordially, and have seldom enjoyed more satisfaction than in the success of that amendment, and the indication which it wafted on the wings of the wind to my constituents and the country. In common with millions of patriotic citizens, I thank the gentleman for that timely amendment. It was most appropriately offered by one of the "immortal fourteen," who refused to vote in the 29th Congress for "the lying preamble."

This is not only an "unnecessary and unconstitutional" war, in its commencement, and therefore wicked, but the controlling motives of its present prosecution are identical with those which led to annexation. This is proved by the fact that, when the Wilmot Proviso, in the last Congress, was attached to a bill of supplies, the personal advisers of the President immediately exerted all their influence to defeat the bill. Why was this the case, unless there was a determination to make slavery co-extensive with our southwestern border? This is apparent, also, from a clause in a late letter from the Chairman of Military Affairs of the Senate, (Gov. CASS,) which he has published in order to show his recantation of faith in the Wilmot Proviso.

The third reason he gives for abandoning the provision that slavery be prohibited in any territory to be acquired from Mexico, is in the following language:

"3. Because I believe in the general conviction, that should such proposition succeed, it would lead to an immediate withholding of the supplies, and thus to a dishonorable termination of the war. I think no dispassionate observer at the seat of Government can doubt this result."

I ask why such a proposition would result in "withholding supplies," unless those supplies are wanted for the purpose, chiefly, of acquiring new slave territory? Gentlemen may affect to scorn the idea that slavery can make progress into Mexico. But, sir, the design of the war is to get as much of that country as possible, and then to admit it by States into the Union as fast as slavery obtains over it a predominant influence. However much or little be obtained, mark the fact, no part of it will ever be admitted, unless with a constitution recognising slavery.

This is a war conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity; and, in its objects and progress, is more characteristic of the 19th century before, than the 19th century after Christ. The people are heart-sick of it, and demand that it cease. They see that we have abandoned the mission on which our nation gloriously embarked; and, forgetting the political precepts of our fathers, and the moral admonitions of our holy religion, we are precipitating a sorrowful failure of the great republican experiment.

I regret that my time will not allow me to examine the array of fearful apprehensions that our circumstances unavoidably bring before me. Look at the plains of Mexico, covered with the slain thousands of our own citizens, and the slain tens of thousands of our sister republic—look at the multitudes in mourning throughout the land—and tell me, whether we are not treasuring up for ourselves "wrath against the day of wrath!" There are other evils besides sacrifice of life. War reverses the order of society; it raises those who should be low, and depresses those who should be high; it exalts without merit, and casts down without fault. Military renown has been the affliction of the nation for 25 years. Hero worship has been the order of the day, and opinions have had less currency on account of their correctness, than on account of their origin. The multiplication of slaves, the multiplication of military heroes, (scarcely less calamitous,) a standing army, a Mexican pro-consulate, an intolerable executive patronage, (now almost too much for liberty,) and the eventual dissolution of our present Government, with the inevitable retributions of Him who rules in Heaven and on earth, are seen in the distance. Let us pause before it is too late.

I avow my position in regard to supplies, which is, to grant them *only* for the purpose of bringing the army home by the shortest route. Being found in a wrong, let us restore the nation *status ante bellum*. We have spoken our sentiments about the necessity of the war, let us not take a course which will oblige us to say—

"We know the right, and we approve it too;
We know the wrong, and yet the wrong pursue."

Let the same vote that declared the war unnecessary and unconstitutional, starve it to death by withholding supplies.

On the subject of the acquisition of territory, it is my belief that, whatever we may acquire, will not make us any the richer, more powerful, or happy. And, I understand, that what we now have south of 36° 30′, produces more annual cost than revenue to the Government. But, as those who talk about our "destiny" are determined to have territory, I go by all means for the re-enactment of the ordinance of 1787; otherwise, for the Wilmot Proviso.

I know what denunciations are hurled against those who express the sentiments I have avowed. But I cannot regard them; my convictions are deep, and my course is plain. I trust I shall never betray myself, or my country, by giving "aid and comfort" to a war which I believe is wrong, dishonorable, and dangerous. Burke, Barre, and Chatham stood by their country in the time of our revolution, and gave advice, remonstrance, and solemn warning, which, if followed, would have saved to England her colonies. In the belief that even the humblest member of this House has the opportunity to imitate their glorious example, I shall denounce the Mexican war, expose the reckless ambition of its authors, and, to the extent of my ability, warn the people against its consequences. If this be treason, my revilers may make the most of it.